

Cp 970.742  
C48.1

**Soldiers' and Sailors' Historical Society  
OF RHODE ISLAND.**

---

**PERSONAL NARRATIVES:  
Fourth Series, No. 3.**

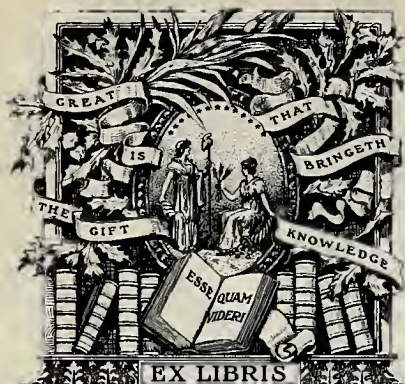
---

**SERVICE WITH BATTERY F, FIRST R. I.  
LIGHT ARTILLERY.**

---

**PHILIP S. CHASE,**  
Late 2d Lieutenant, Battery F, First R. I. Light Artillery.

---



EX LIBRIS

STEPHEN B. WEEKS

CLASS OF 1896; PH.D. THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

LIBRARY  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
THE WEEKS COLLECTION  
OF  
CAROLINIANA

Cp 970.742 - C48.1

PERSONAL NARRATIVES  
OF EVENTS IN THE  
WAR OF THE REBELLION,  
BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE  
RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

---

FOURTH SERIES - No. 3.

---

PROVIDENCE:  
PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.  
1889.

*The Providence Press:*  
SNOW & FARNHAM, PRINTERS  
37 Custom House Street.  
1889.

SERVICE  
WITH  
BATTERY F,  
FIRST RHODE ISLAND LIGHT ARTILLERY.

---

BY  
PHILIP S. CHASE,  
[Late Second Lieutenant Battery F, First Rhode Island Light Artillery.]

---

PROVIDENCE:  
PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY.  
1889.

[Edition limited to two hundred and fifty copies.]

SERVICE  
WITH  
BATTERY F, FIRST RHODE ISLAND LIGHT ARTILLERY.

---

THE previous papers which I have had the honor to read before this Society brought the record of service with Battery F (Belger's Rhode Island Battery), to May 1, 1863, at which time we were occupying comfortable quarters at New Berne, North Carolina.

Since the operations at Washington, North Carolina, in April 1863, when the enemy was forced to raise the siege of that town and retire from its vicinity, although active offensive manœuvres were in progress in other departments, as General Hooker with the Army of the Potomac at Chancellorsville; General Grant with the western armies on the Mis-

---

NOTE. For previous sketches of Battery F, First Rhode Island Light Artillery, see papers by the same author, No. 3, Second Series, and No. 7, Third Series.

p 75-84

Mississippi at or near Vicksburg, and General Banks in the Department of the Gulf; the troops in the Department of North Carolina were enjoying the quiet of camp, with no enemy in their front to annoy them and apparently no disposition on their part to find an enemy to annoy.

The casualties of the service had placed me in the position of First Sergeant, which I had occupied since December, 1862, when Alexander M. Massie was severely wounded. The resignation of First Lieutenant William A. Arnold, on the 4th of May, 1863, created a vacancy in the commissioned officers. The following is the official notification to the state authorities of the vacancy :

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY F, 1ST REGT. R. I. L. ARTY.

NEW BERNE, N. C., May 5, 1863.

GENERAL E. C. MAURAN, *Adjutant General State of R. I.* :

SIR:—I have the honor to inform you that First Lieutenant William A. Arnold, of Battery F, 1st Regiment R. I. Light Artillery, resigned his commission on the 4th instant.

I enclose herewith copy of Special Order No. 128, Par. 8, dated Headquarters Department of North Carolina, 18th Army Corps, New Berne, May 4, 1863, accepting the same.



I respectfully recommend Second Lieutenant Peter C. Smith, of Battery F, for First Lieutenant, and First Sergeant Philip S. Chase, of said Battery, for Second Lieutenant.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

T. SIMPSON,

*1st Lieut. 1st Regt. R. I. Lt. Arty. Comd'g Battery F.*

I received the appointment of Second Lieutenant under date of May 14, 1863, was assigned to Battery F, and was mustered on my commission May 17, 1863.

Nothing occurred during the following few weeks to break the monotony of camp life. Mounted drills in the early morning at four o'clock, to avoid the heat of the day, took place every pleasant morning, and no further duty except stable and guard was performed until late in the afternoon, when the "manual of the piece" occupied our attention for an hour.

Thus the time passed until June 24, 1863, when I received my first "Leave of Absence." It was written "for twenty-five days, with permission to proceed north," and reached me in the form of Special Orders, No. 179, Headquarters Department of North Carolina, Eighteenth Army Corps, New Berne, June 24, 1863. The privilege which that order granted

was promptly accepted, and learning that a steamer, the *Ellen S. Terry*, would sail for New York that afternoon I proceeded in "light marching order" to board her, and after a pleasant voyage arrived in New York Saturday, June 27th. Taking passage that night on the Fall River boat, reached home in Portsmouth, R. I., about noon, Sunday, after an absence of twenty months.

July 4, 1863, I accepted an invitation to parade upon the staff of the First Regiment Militia, Colonel William W. Paine, at Providence, and at the close of the parade take luncheon at the residence of His Excellency, Governor James Y. Smith. I can never forget the greeting of His Excellency upon being presented to him, and his pleasant words of advice. I was but nineteen years old, very boyish in appearance, and probably needed advice as much as anything.

I left Rhode Island to rejoin the Battery Monday evening, July 13th, visiting on the way Newark, New Jersey, and Poughkeepsie, New York. This was at the time of the draft riots in New York city, and of excitement in other large northern centres.

Arriving in New York Tuesday morning, July 14th, I immediately proceeded to Newark, New Jersey, the attraction being a young lady whom I was endeavoring to persuade that I was the best and bravest young man she had ever known. I found the aforesaid young lady visiting at the house of a relative on Centre Street, and was very kindly invited to remain with them as a guest. While there I noticed some confusion and mysterious movements about the house, but as my attention was almost entirely given to the particular business which called me to the place, I thought little of it. Imagine my surprise when informed the next day that the Provost Marshal of Newark was a fugitive, fleeing from the mob, secreted in that house! The mob had attacked his residence, broken the windows, obliging him and his family to make their escape from the place. This gentleman, Mr. Newton Miller, with his wife, remained secreted in that house when I left the next day.

The aforesaid young lady having arranged to visit Poughkeepsie, and my contract not having been completed, I was forced to go, also, to that city, passing

the nights of the 15th and 16th there. Much excitement prevailed there on account of the riots, nearly every man carrying a musket as he walked the streets. Making the acquaintance of a gentleman, we made a tour of the city on the night of the 16th. Visiting several large restaurants I was astonished to see that nearly every one had a musket within reach while sitting at the tables, and I remarked that at the front we were not so particular about carrying fire-arms when not on duty, and it seemed strange that in the North, far away from the hostile armies, it was thought necessary to be armed thus at all times. I do not think our troops at the front ever realized the intense anxiety and excitement which prevailed in the large Northern cities during the summer of 1863.

I left Poughkeepsie early on the morning of the 17th of July, by steamer, for New York city. I was in the uniform of a lieutenant of Light Artillery, the only clothing I had, and just before the steamer's arrival in New York an elderly gentleman stepped in front of me and said :

"Young man, are you going to New York?"

I replied that as that was the destination of the

steamer, I rather thought I was. He said, "Let me advise you to take off that uniform if you wish to go through the city in safety, for the life of an officer of the Union army is not worth much in New York to-day."

I answered that as I had no other clothing with me I should be obliged to appear as he saw me. He made some remark about the "foolishness" of doing so, and left me, but just before landing he again tried to persuade me to conceal my uniform before leaving the steamer.

I landed, however, transacted the little business necessary in arranging transportation, and sailed at four o'clock in the afternoon on the steamer *Dudley Buck* for New Berne, N. C., where I arrived in the early morning of the 21st of July, without incident.

During my absence the Battery joined another of those expeditions into the country which were frequently made from New Berne, leaving its quarters on the 4th of July. The order for the march directed the line to form at 3.30 o'clock on the morning of the 4th of July, on the Trent road, in the following order: Ninth New Jersey Volunteers, Bel-

ger's Rhode Island Battery, Twenty-third Massachusetts Volunteers, Eighty-first New York Volunteers and Seventeenth Massachusetts Volunteers. On the 5th, when about six miles beyond Trenton, N. C., the main body halted, and a small force, with which was one section of Battery F, was sent forward, and the next day, July 6th, met and engaged the enemy at "Free Bridge." The engagement was of the nature of a skirmish, and no loss, except that of ammunition, was sustained by the Battery. After the skirmish the whole command returned to New Berne, arriving the next day, July 7th, having covered a distance of about sixty miles.

A few days after my return from leave of absence we were again under marching orders, and on the 24th of July the Battery embarked at New Berne on the steamer *Escort*. The next morning, Saturday, July 25th, we steamed down the river and up the sounds, past Roanoke Island, entering the Chowan River, a small stream navigable but a short distance, which flows from the northwest and empties into Albemarle Sound near its western limits. We arrived at Winton, N. C., Sunday, July 26th, and immedi-

ately disembarked. One section, which I accompanied, was moved forward by hand about five miles towards a bridge over a small stream called "Potte-casy Creek," accompanied by an infantry support. Just before reaching the bridge an earthwork was discovered thrown across the road, and a slight skirmish took place; but one of our guns was brought into action and only two rounds fired, the infantry promptly driving the enemy, who must have been in very small numbers, from the work. We were to remain at the bridge with the infantry while the Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry and First New York Mounted Rifles made a raid inland to Weldon, N. C. From a letter written at that time I find my opinion to have been that the cavalry raid was not a success; they were behind time in reaching Murfreesboro, and only reached Jackson, N. C., when they met the enemy in force and were obliged to fall back.

I suppose the object of the raid was to destroy railroads and telegraph lines at Weldon, and thus break one of the lines of communication between Richmond and the South.

On the return of the cavalry, July 30th, our two

guns were hauled back to Winton, joining the remainder of the Battery, and were loaded on steamer *Curlew*, sailing, as soon as all were embarked, for New Berne, where we arrived on the 1st of August, late in the afternoon, having met with no casualties.

I remember that while we were guarding the bridge at Pottecas Creek foraging parties went out and considerable property was brought in, including a barrel of the famous "apple-jack." During the four days and nights we spent at the bridge it required considerable caution and some prompt action to prevent the "apple-jack" accomplishing what there appeared to be no other enemy to do, viz. : capturing the whole command, or rather placing them *hors de combat*.

The following is the official report of the part taken by Battery F in the expedition as made to the Assistant Adjutant-General of the Brigade :

HEADQUARTERS BATTERY F, 1ST REG'T. R. I. LT. ARTY.  
NEW BERNE, N. C., August 1, 1863.

CAPT. W. H. ABELL, A. A. G. *Heckman's Brigade, 18th Army Corps :*

CAPTAIN :—I have the honor to submit the following report of the service of Battery F, 1st Regt. R. I. Lt. Artillery, on the recent expedition in this Department.



The Battery embarked on board the steamer *Escort* July 24, 1863, and sailed from New Berne, N. C., July 25, 1863. Arrived at Winton, N. C., July 26, 1863. Disembarked and moved forward with one section towards the bridge over Pottecasay Creek. Engaged the enemy at the rifle-pits near the bridge with one piece, firing two (2) rounds of ammunition. Returning, left Winton, N. C., on board steamer *Curlew*, July 30, 1863, arriving at New Berne, N. C., August 1, 1863. No casualties.

I am, Captain, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

THOS. SIMPSON,

*1st Lieut. 1st Regt. R. I. Lt. Arty. Comd'g Battery F.*

During the months of August and September, 1863, nothing occurred to break the monotony of daily drills, excepting an occasional inspection.

Saturday, October 10th, orders were received for one section of the Battery to report to Col. S. H. Mix, Third New York Cavalry, with seven days rations, the section to move by water transportation by nine o'clock same night. First Lieut. Peter C. Smith, with the right section, was detailed and accompanied the cavalry to Elizabeth City. They returned on the 16th of October without incident.

On the 19th of October Major S. V. Harbert, Paymaster United States Army, visited our quarters for the purpose of paying the troops for the months July and August. He addressed a letter to Captain

Belger as follows: "Upon comparison of the muster rolls of your company with General Orders No. 126, I find it deficient in the requisite number of privates (122). As the instructions from the Secretary of War to Major-General Foster particularly refer to that point, I do not see how I can pay the extra officers, which I would be pleased to do if I could."

This letter caused me considerable anxiety, being one of the extra officers referred to, and it was not until December that the payment was finally authorized. A letter, dated the 20th of October, which was addressed by Captain Belger to "Headquarters Forces and Defences of New Berne," explaining the situation, was passed on from headquarters to headquarters until it reached the Adjutant-General's Office, Washington, D. C., November 19th, just one month after it was written. On the 27th of November it received the endorsement of the Secretary of War authorizing the payment, and started on its return trip, reaching the Battery on the third of December.

The endorsement placed upon the letter by Major

General Butler, commanding Department of Virginia and North Carolina, I take the liberty of quoting in full, as showing the reputation of the Battery at Department Headquarters.

“HEADQUARTERS DEPT. OF VA. AND NO. CA.

FORTRESS MONROE, VA., Novbr. 15, '63.

Respectfully forwarded to the Adj. Gen'l. with the request that the Pay Dep't. be authorized to pay the extra officers and non-commissioned officers allowed by Gen'l. Orders 126, series '62. This Battery is one of the very best in this Dep't., and it would in my opinion be prejudicial to the interests of the service to have the Battery reduced to four guns. The number of men required (14) can no doubt be easily recruited if authority be granted for a recruiting party to be sent from this Battery to R. Island.

BENJ. F. BUTLER, *Maj. Gen'l Comdg.*”

The question was satisfactorily settled, the extra officers and non-commissioned officers paid, and the Battery remained a six-gun battery.

October 30, 1863, we bade farewell to North Carolina and our comfortable quarters, which had been extremely pleasant and which we had occupied since March, 1862. Special Orders, No. 62, Headquarters Army and District of North Carolina, October 23, 1863, had been received, directing a portion of the troops stationed in North Carolina to rendezvous

at Newport News, Va. Battery F was included in the number, and on the above date all our property and stores were placed on board the steamers *Ella May*, *Pilot Boy* and *Colonel Rucker*. At midnight lines were cast off and we steamed away.

Just two years service had at this time been given to our country, and we certainly had no cause to complain. While we had not seen as much hard fighting as troops in some departments we had experiences which did not fall to the lot of light batteries generally. We had been a part of the Burnside Coast Division, a semi-naval force; were knocked about on shipboard during the storm, which caused such disaster to the expedition off Hatteras and such anxiety to friends at home; had twice landed our entire battery from vessels by throwing the horses overboard and towing them ashore by small boats, and rafting the guns and other property to the land; had made numerous raids both by land and water in the Department of North Carolina; had served as cavalry for several weeks after the capture of New Berne, and had made a reputation in the Department of which we were justly proud. It was

with feelings of regret and sorrow that we left these scenes of our exploits and sailed for the unknown duties which were before us.

The route by which we were to reach Newport News lay overland through the Dismal Swamp. The force consisted of the Third New York Cavalry and Belger's Rhode Island and Rigg's New York Batteries. The three transports upon which Battery F made the first part of the journey came to anchor off Roanoke Island about six o'clock on the evening of October 31st, and the men were mustered for pay, it being the regular day for that ceremony. At about eleven o'clock in the evening of the same day the fleet "weighed anchors" and proceeded to Elizabeth City, N. C., arriving at about four o'clock in the morning of November 1st. This is a small town situated near the mouth of the Pasquotank River, a small stream flowing from the north and emptying into Albemarle Sound on its northern shore. The place had been frequently visited by the Union forces but no permanent occupation taken place. We disembarked our men and horses and remained until the morning of the 2d of November,

when we again embarked and steamed up the river about three miles to Camden, N. C. At this place we left the transports and remained in bivouac until sunrise November 3d, my twentieth birthday, when we took the road for South Mills, about fourteen miles distant, at which point we were to strike the Dismal Swamp Canal. A squadron of the Third New York Cavalry, with two mountain howitzers, led the advance, followed by a section of Belger's Battery (F, First Rhode Island), commanded by Lieutenant Chase, (Philip S). The advance was somewhat annoyed by guerrillas, and at one point enjoyed the privilege of capturing an earthwork which was not occupied, but the disposition of the troops and prompt action, considering the uncertainty of the situation, I think, gave additional evidence of the efficiency of the Third New York Cavalry. Emerging from the woods into a clearing upon the opposite side of which stretched the earthwork, some three hundred yards away, the advance company promptly dismounted and deployed as skirmishers; the two howitzers were brought to the front and threw a few shell into the works; the skir-

mishers advanced rapidly to the parapet to find — a deserted work with no signs of having been recently occupied. This affair with some guerrilla skirmishing and a single shell from one of my guns fired up a cross-road where a few persons were seen, merely to remind them that war was in the land, comprised all the fighting which took place on that march.

The command reached South Mills at about eleven o'clock, A. M., and taking the tow-path of the canal, pushed on towards Deep Creek, Va., where we arrived at about eleven o'clock in the evening, having traveled about forty-one miles since morning. The day was beautiful, the tow-path in excellent condition for traveling, almost equal to a macadamized road, and the march proved to be a pleasant experience. The canal was nearly dry and several sailing vessels were noticed "high and dry," apparently unserviceable.

We bivouacked for the night at Deep Creek, near the camps of the Union forces, and at nine o'clock in the morning of the 4th of November, took the road for Portsmouth, Va., arriving about eleven o'clock. It was a real November day, cold and blus-

tering, and I think it safe to say that the men passed very few more uncomfortable ones during their service. We were marched to a wharf, where we remained until nearly sunset, waiting for a steamer to take us to Fortress Monroe. At last the steamer *Conqueror* arrived alongside the wharf, and no time was lost in embarking. The *Conqueror* reached Fortress Monroe at about eleven o'clock same evening, and after some parleying we were ordered to remain on board until morning. Disembarking on the morning of the 5th November, we marched to Newport News, Va., arriving at about three o'clock in the afternoon, and went into camp. Here we found many of our comrades from North Carolina, encamped and organized as Heckman's Brigade, afterward's Heckman's Division, commanded by Brigadier-General C. A. Heckman, of New Jersey. Six regiments of infantry, one of cavalry and four light batteries comprised the Division at this time.

On our arrival at Newport News Captain Belger was assigned Chief of Artillery, Heckman's Brigade, and I was appointed Acting Adjutant. The command consisted of Batteries F, First Rhode Island



Light Artillery, H and M, Third New York Artillery and the Sixteenth New York Battery.

Thanksgiving day, November 26, 1863, was duly observed by the troops at Newport News. Religious services were held in the morning, and horse racing, mule racing, greased pig and greased pole constituted the afternoon programme.

December 16, 1863, I received "Leave of Absence for ten days," and left Fortress Monroe Saturday, December 19th, for Portsmouth, R. I., arriving the following Tuesday. I remained at home until Sunday, December 27th, leaving for Fortress Monroe on that evening and arrived the following Tuesday, the day my "leave" expired. Notwithstanding my prompt return I was reported on all returns for December 31, 1863, and for nine days thereafter as "Absent without leave." The reason for the same is explained as follows :

December 23, 1863, in compliance with Special Order, No. 209, Headquarters Heckman's Brigade, Newport News, Va., December 22, 1863, the battery left Newport News by steamer *Conqueror* and landed at Point Lookout, Maryland, next morning. I

was entirely ignorant of the change of station until I reported at Newport News on my return, December 29th. Col. S. H. Mix, Third New York Cavalry, was in command at Newport News. He caused my return from "leave" to be properly recorded, and issued S. O., No. 228, directing me to report to the battery at Point Lookout. But how to get there was the question. I visited Fortress Monroe daily, looking for transportation, until January 3, 1864, when I was ordered to Baltimore to endeavor to procure passage from that point. Accordingly, the morning of the 4th of January found me at the Quartermaster's Department in Baltimore, where I was informed that it might be several days before a steamer would leave for Point Lookout. I proceeded to make the best of the situation, and but for financial reasons, would not have cared very much how long the delay continued. The only duty required of me in Baltimore was to report at the Quartermaster's Department each morning. Upon reporting Friday morning, January 8, 1864, I was informed that the steamer *W. Whilden* would leave that day for the desired point, and was furnished transportation. I

immediately transferred my quarters from the Maltby House to the said steamer, and at seven o'clock same evening was landed at Point Lookout, where I found the battery, having been absent twenty-one days on a "Leave of Absence" for ten days.

By way of parenthesis it might be said that the subject of finance troubled me considerably while at Baltimore. A bill for board at the Maltby House was steadily increasing, even while I slept, and you who have enjoyed the experiences of a "Leave of Absence," know that the return usually takes place with depleted funds. How to "raise the wind" and get away from Baltimore honorably was a serious question. But "fortune favors the brave." The last day but one of my stay there I was made extremely happy by meeting at the hotel a naval officer — Captain Foster — whom I had known quite intimately in North Carolina. I immediately struck him, for friendship's sake, for a loan, which he freely supplied, and my troubles in that line were over for the time being.

At Point Lookout, which is situated at the mouth of the Potomac River, on the Maryland side, was

located a rebel prisoners' camp, and a rumor became prevalent that an attempt on the part of the prisoners would be made to escape, hence the guard was increased. The force at the Point at this time comprised the Second, Fifth and Twelfth New Hampshire Infantry, two Companies of the Fourth United States Cavalry and Battery F, First Rhode Island Light Artillery. Before the war this was quite a noted resort for pleasure-seekers and invalids. The large boarding-house, which had undoubtedly been the scene of many pleasant gatherings from north and south, was now occupied by the United States government, and the representatives from the south, about ten thousand strong, were carefully cared for in an enclosed camp. Every precaution was taken that none of the large number should get lost or stray from the sight of their northern visitors.

As we recall the treatment shown those men by our government, and contrast the same with the accounts written by our boys of experiences at Andersonville and other southern prisons, it brings to mind again that in the exchange of prisoners the confederates were important gainers, as we returned to them

sound, well fed, able bodied, for half starved, sick and broken down men, totally unfit for service.

Our duties at Point Lookout were rather irksome, principally "waiting for something to turn up," although we did occasionally have a mounted drill. We remained at this station until the 23d of January, over four weeks, when we were relieved by the Second Wisconsin Battery (Germans). The Wisconsin battery arrived by steamer and disembarked during the night of the 19th. On the morning of the 20th they moved to our left and went into park. We felt very sure that we should make a move as soon after this arrival as possible, and were very glad to receive, on the 21st of January, orders directing us to proceed to Yorktown, Va. Accordingly, Saturday, January 23d, we embarked the battery on steamers *John Tucker* and *Convoy*, sailing at about one o'clock P. M., and arriving at Yorktown at about eight o'clock in the evening. We disembarked at once and occupied barracks vacated by the Wisconsin battery which relieved us at Point Lookout. The barracks were located inside "Fort Yorktown," upon ground already memorable for scenes enacted

during the War for Independence and also the War of the Rebellion. The situation was delightful, upon a high level, the view quite extended, and I recall with pleasure many hours spent upon the parapet of the old fort indulging in day dreams of the future and trying to form some idea of the closing acts of the Revolution, which took place near the spot.

On the 27th of January Captain Belger, who had remained at Newport News as Chief of Artillery, arrived at Yorktown and relieved First Lieutenant Thomas Simpson of the command of the battery.

February 5th the battery received marching orders, with six days' rations, and at three o'clock in the afternoon left our quarters and marched to Williamsburg, arriving at about six and one-half o'clock, where we bivouacked for the night. The next morning we joined a force consisting of six regiments of infantry, two light batteries and parts of five regiments of cavalry, the whole commanded by Brigadier-General Isaac J. Wistar. It was believed that a very small force protected Richmond at this time, and that a sudden dash from the south side might be successful in entering the city and doing much dam-

age, besides liberating the Union prisoners at Libby, etc. Accordingly, at about half-past ten o'clock, Saturday morning, February 6, 1864, the command marched through Williamsburg and "On to Richmond." Perhaps *the* success of the expedition was a general order read to each regiment and battery as they were about to start, and as it is desirable to record some successful feature of the movement, a copy of said order is here given :

HEADQUARTERS WISTAR'S DIVISION,

WILLIAMSBURG, VA., February 6, 1864.

GENERAL ORDERS, }  
No. 4.

SOLDIERS:—You are about to strike a great and glorious blow — a blow which has been profoundly considered and carefully prepared, but which must fall suddenly, silently, irresistibly.

Our country now asks all your courage, all your endurance. All our brothers-in-arms will envy you the opportunity. I ask you for a few days to encounter, with a soldier's readiness, hard fare, forced marches, wintry bivouacs, and, perhaps, calm and steady fighting.

Respond as you have always done, and I promise you, with God's blessing, a result which will bring glory to our flag, and honor to all who serve under its folds.

ISAAC J. WISTAR,

*Brig. Gen'l. Comd'g.*

Official: JAMES E. FLEMING, *Captain and A. D. C.*

It was understood among the troops that the cavalry of the command had received special instructions to be followed upon arriving at Richmond, assigning to each company or squadron some particular duty to perform, such as the capture of Jeff Davis; liberate prisoners at Libby; burn certain public buildings, etc.

As previously stated, the column passed through Williamsburg at about half-past ten o'clock, Saturday morning, February 6th, and continued the march until three o'clock on the morning of the 7th, when it had reached "New Kent Court House." The infantry and artillery were here halted and a rest until six o'clock, A. M., taken. The night of the 6th was the darkest, it seemed to me, I had ever experienced. It was impossible to see objects a few feet away, and in order to keep in the road it was necessary to send a man with a lantern in advance. As the rear of the column was passing through "Richardson's Mills" a rocket suddenly shot into the air and a bright light was seen at a distance through an opening in the woods, which were probably signals to the enemy of our approach, as upon the arrival



of the cavalry at Bottom bridge, Chickahominy River, at about daybreak on the 7th (they did not halt with the rest of the command at New Kent Court House), it was found to be impassable, and attempts to cross at the fords were met by a force of the enemy with artillery.

At six o'clock, A. M., of the 7th, the infantry and artillery, after three hours' rest, again moved on towards Bottom Bridge, and about noon met the cavalry returning.

The rear guard on the return march, of which Battery F formed a part, was attacked by a small force of cavalry, and I was ordered to take one piece and give them our compliments, which was done by firing four shells into their midst; they appeared satisfied as we were not troubled again. The battery reached its quarters at Yorktown at about four o'clock in the afternoon of the 9th of February, and the expedition ended minus the "glorious results" predicted in the general order above mentioned.

On the return of the command measures were at once taken to ascertain the cause of the defeat of the plans, or rather how the information reached the

enemy in time to be prepared to defend the crossings at the Chickahominy River. As the result of the investigation private Thomas Abrahams, Company G, One Hundred and Thirty-ninth New York Volunteers, was tried by court-martial and sentenced to be "shot to death with musketry." The proceedings, findings and sentence of the court were approved, and on the 7th day of March, 1864, the sentence was carried into effect in the presence of all the troops stationed at Yorktown.

The execution took place on the plain south of Fort Yorktown. The troops were formed in line, the infantry on the two sides of a parallelogram, Battery F at one end, and the prisoner sitting on his coffin at the other.

When all were in position the adjutant of each regiment and junior officer of the battery were required to read to the troops the order condemning the prisoner to death. The ground upon which the battery was placed sloped gently to the rear, and I congratulated myself that as junior second lieutenant my position would place me under the brow of the hill, or rising ground, where I could not see the

condemned man. At the proper time I rode to the front and read the order to the battery, and, much to my own surprise, voluntarily remained there and witnessed the execution. I never could account for the sudden change from a feeling of dread, and a shrinking from the sight, to a desire to see the whole procedure, which came over me.

In executions of this character the firing detail consists of twelve men; their guns are taken from them and loaded, eleven with ball and one with blank cartridge; they are then returned in such manner that no one knows who has the gun loaded with the blank; the detail is then divided into two parties, one of eight men, who constitute the main firing party, and the other four a reserve, to be used in case the first fire is not effective. In this particular case the first fire was effective, killing the man instantly. The body remained as it fell, and the whole command marched in review, as it were, before the dead man. As each company arrived opposite the body the command was given "eyes right," that each man might receive a lasting impression of the penalty of treason. This was the first and only

execution I witnessed, although others took place at Yorktown. I have forgotten just how this man became responsible for the failure of the expedition, and have not been able to find any record of the charges and specifications of which he was found guilty.

In February, 1864, General Kilpatrick with his cavalry made the famous raid around Richmond. On the first day of March a force consisting of the First New York Mounted Rifles, Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Twenty-second United States Colored Troops, and Battery F, First Rhode Island Light Artillery, the whole commanded by Colonel West, left Williamsburg to go up the peninsula and meet General Kilpatrick. Battery F was in quarters at Yorktown when the marching orders were received, March 1st, which ordered four days cooked rations. Preparations were quickly made, the rations cooked and issued, and at six o'clock same evening we started for Williamsburg to join in the expedition, arriving at about nine and a half o'clock. The night was dark and stormy. About eleven o'clock the order was given "forward,"

and amid snow, rain and hail, the temperature freezing cold, the command marched out from Williamsburg for New Kent Court House. It was a night to test the power of endurance of both men and horses; at about one o'clock on the morning of the second the wind changed to the northwest and blew very cold; our clothing being completely wet, froze, thus adding to the discomforts of the march. At seven o'clock on the morning of the second, when we halted a half hour for breakfast, my overcoat would have stood alone, frozen, had I taken it off. We marched until two o'clock in the afternoon of the second, when we arrived at New Kent Court House. After caring for the horses, our men secured about an hour of rest. At about four o'clock same afternoon we again "hitched up" and remained in position nearly all of that night, the cavalry scouting the country. On the morning of the 3d of March one section — platoon under present tactics — of the battery, under Lieutenant Simpson, joined with a regiment of cavalry and marched some distance beyond "White House"; one section in command of Lieutenant Smith was ordered to report to Colonel Duncan,

who, with a part of the infantry, followed the main body of the cavalry up the peninsula, traveling, however, but about two miles, when they halted and waited for developments. I was ordered to report to Colonel West for staff duty, and remained with him during the rest of the day.

General Kilpatrick's cavalry were discovered by the cavalry of our division during the night of the 2d, and on the morning of the 3d the two commands came together. The march down the peninsula commenced immediately. Colonel Spear's Eleventh Pennsylvania Cavalry remained at New Kent Court House for the night; the infantry and Battery F came through to Barnsville and bivouacked, and General Kilpatrick's troops passed the night at "Burnt Ordinary." On the morning of the 4th, at about seven o'clock, we resumed the homeward march, if soldiers can be said to have a home, arriving at our quarters in Yorktown at about eight o'clock in the evening, having halted for a couple of hours at Williamsburg on the way.

General Kilpatrick's command, at the time we met, carried with them evidences of the hard service they

had performed during the five days previous. Many of the men were without hats or caps, wearing handkerchiefs tied over their heads, and the appearance of both men and horses gave proof of the hardships encountered on that great raid. Their route of march could have been traced by the horses, dead from hard riding and exhaustion, lying by the roadside. The account of their experiences by some participant would, I am sure, make an interesting paper to be read before this Society.

March 8th one section of the battery under command of Lieutenant Smith was ordered to report to Lieutenant Hunt, commanding Battery L, Fourth United States Artillery, for a raid. They crossed the river to Gloucester Point at about six and a half o'clock same evening and reported as directed.

Lieutenant Smith reported on his return, about ten o'clock at night, March 12th, that the object of the expedition was to learn something of Colonel Dahlgren, one of General Kilpatrick's regimental commanders, who was missing, and supposed to have been killed and his body mutilated. The report was found to be correct, and in retaliation for the treat-

ment of the dead officer a village was destroyed by fire and the command returned.

March 22d two sections of the battery received marching orders ; a driving snow storm was prevailing at the time and the prospect for an enjoyable trip was not pleasant ; but before the time, six o'clock in the evening, for the start arrived the orders were countermanded and this further attempt to capture Richmond, if such it was, was abandoned.

April 13th we received orders to report to Colonel Duncan to witness the execution of a private of the Second New Hampshire Volunteers, a substitute and bounty jumper. The enforcement of Army Regulations was in this case very prompt, as will be seen by the following extract from the general order : " Private John Eagan, Company A, Second New Hampshire Volunteers, deserted his regiment on the tenth instant, was arrested on the eleventh, tried, convicted and sentenced by court-martial on the twelfth, will be shot to death with musketry on the thirteenth between the hours of five and six P. M." After arriving on the field he was reprieved for forty-eight hours, at the end of which time he, and another



from the same regiment, were executed. Such summary punishment was deemed necessary to stop the wholesale desertions among the substitutes recently arrived for that regiment.

During the month of April the Tenth Corps arrived at Gloucester Point, opposite Yorktown, and other troops rendezvoused at that place and Yorktown, preparatory to the opening of the campaign of 1864. Saturday, April 23d, Battery F was assigned to the Second Division, Eighteenth Corps, and from that time until the end of the month inspections and reviews were in order. I remember that on the 28th of April the battery was ordered out to fire a salute of fifteen guns in honor of the arrival of Governor Yates, of Illinois, and on the 30th of April a part of the Eighteenth Corps was reviewed by General B. F. Butler, the First Division, one brigade of the Second Division and eight light batteries appearing in the line. The artillery marched in "column of batteries," a formation not often witnessed on review.

By the close of April all surplus stores and company property had been turned into the quartermas-

ter's department for storage. The officers had reduced their baggage to the lowest limit. For myself, everything I possessed, excepting the clothing I wore and one change, was sent home. We knew we were preparing to take part in a campaign that would test our courage, efficiency and endurance beyond anything yet experienced, but, of course, did not know the nature or the locality of the operations before us. A recital of the experiences of that campaign must be left for another occasion.

The health of the command on the 30th of April, 1864, was remarkably good, two men only being absent sick. The casualties during the year ending with that date had been as follows: One commissioned officer — First Lieutenant William A. Arnold — resigned; four enlisted men discharged for promotion, viz.: First Sergeant Philip S. Chase, promoted to Second Lieutenant Battery F, First Rhode Island Light Artillery; Private Pardon S. Payne, enlisted as Hospital Steward, United States Army; Private William A. Tefft, promoted to Second Lieutenant Fourteenth Rhode Island Heavy Artillery (Colored), and Private Henry Graham,

promoted to Second Lieutenant Fourteenth Rhode Island Heavy Artillery (Colored) ; six enlisted men discharged for disability, viz. : Solomon Loid, Edward Cruden, John Osborne, John Butterworth, John Fitzgibbons and Henry Whittemore, one of whom, John Butterworth, the result of wounds received in action ; and one enlisted man deserted, viz. : Charles L. Anderson.

The gains during the same time were one commissioned officer, Second Lieutenant Chase, as above, six recruits and one enlisted man, James Wilson, from desertion.

From December, 1863, to March, 1864, inclusive, twenty-nine enlisted men re-enlisted as veteran volunteers, and received the veteran furlough of thirty days.

The strength of the battery April 30, 1864, as appears upon the monthly return of that date, was five commissioned officers and one hundred and twenty-nine enlisted men, with one hundred and ten horses ; requiring twenty-one recruits to fill the ranks to the maximum number.







UNIVERSITY OF N.C. AT CHAPEL HILL



00032734676

FOR USE ONLY IN  
THE NORTH CAROLINA COLLECTION

---

THIS ITEM MAY NOT BE COPIED  
ON THE SELF-SERVICE OF

